



File Code: 2350-4

Date: July 11, 2008

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Sisters Ranger District is working on a management plan to protect and enhance the special qualities of Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River, and we need your help. We'd appreciate your review of the information in this letter and your thoughts on how we can best protect this special river.

What is Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River?

Wild and Scenic Rivers are a national program. The goal of this program is to protect selected rivers or segments of rivers with outstandingly remarkable values in their free flowing condition for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System has only 11,409 river miles in it - just over one-quarter of one percent of our nation's rivers are protected through this designation.



Wychus Creek (formerly Squaw Creek) is a perennial stream that is a tributary of the Deschutes River. It is approximately 41 miles long from its headwaters to its mouth. Whychus Creek was designated by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River as part of the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988. The designated area includes 15.4 miles, beginning at the source and ending at the USGS hydrological gauging station that is approximately 4 miles southwest of the City of Sisters in Central Oregon. The entire Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor is managed by the U. S. Forest Service. There is no private land within the Wild and Scenic River boundary.

The source of Whychus Creek begins on the glaciers of the Three Sisters mountains and includes Soap Creek, the South and North Forks of Whychus Creek, and Park Creek, including the East and West Forks of Park Creek. The 6.6 mile segment from the source to the Three Sisters Wilderness boundary is classified as "Wild". Wild rivers are defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as: *"Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America."*



The 8.8 mile segment from the Three Sisters Wilderness boundary to the USGS hydrological gauging station is classified as “Scenic.” Scenic Rivers are defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as: *“Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.”*

Special consideration of Carver Lake, a high-elevation moraine lake on South Sister, is included in the designation for Whychus Creek. In the mid-1980’s Carver Lake was identified as a potential flood risk for Sisters and homes along Whychus Creek by the U.S. Geological Survey. Risk reports have since been downgraded. The Wild and Scenic River designation states: *“Nothing in this Act shall prohibit the construction of facilities necessary for emergency protection for the town of Sisters relative to a rapid discharge of Carver Lake if no reasonable flood warning or control alternative exists.”*

What is the Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan?

Wild and Scenic River Management Plans are created to guide public use and enjoyment of the river while protecting and enhancing the rivers outstandingly remarkable values. The purpose of a management plan is to fulfill the requirements of Section 3(d) (1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act that states that “the Federal agency charged with the administration of each component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System shall prepare a comprehensive management plan...to provide for the protection of river values. The plan shall address resource protection, development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of this Act.”

In 2007, a team of Forest Service resource specialists identified the following Outstandingly Remarkable Values and other significant values of Whychus Creek as unique on a regional or national scale:

Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

- Geology
- Hydrology
- Fisheries
- Scenic Resources
- Cultural- Prehistory
- Cultural- Traditional Use

The following values were found to be significant and contribute to the river’s character. These values may need varying levels of protection and consideration during the river planning process.

- Wildlife
- Ecology/Botany
- Cultural- History
- Recreation

The Planning Process

We intend to prepare an environmental assessment for the Whychus Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan that would amend the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The Wild and Scenic River Management Plan would incorporate existing Forest Plan standards and guidelines where appropriate and address the adequacy of existing direction. It could also propose new standards and guidelines if needed, to protect and enhance the free-flowing nature, water quality, and the Outstandingly Remarkable Values for which Whychus Creek was designated a Wild and Scenic River. Other values rated as significant may also need consideration or additional protection. The proposed action would also determine the final legal boundary for Whychus Creek that best protects the Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

In general the Management Plan will:

- Describe the desired condition(s) for the river
- Describe the standards and guidelines necessary to guide management actions in the future
- Develop a monitoring plan
- Provide a framework to add potential new management direction
- Identify the final boundary

Timeline

The following table displays the timeline for completion of the Whychus Wild and Scenic River Plan.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Date</i>
Scoping/Public comments	July 2008
Public Field Trip	July 29, 2008, 9 am-12
Plan Development	August - December 2008
Environmental Assessment	January 2009

How can you get involved?

Visit the Area on a Field Trip

I'd like to invite you to join members of the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team to explore this little known Wild and Scenic River in our own backyard. A field trip will be held on Tuesday July 29, 2008 from 9- 12 pm. We'll meet at the Sisters Ranger District office. The areas we will visit are off trails and have uneven terrain so please wear boots, long pants, and shirts. Please be prepared to drive your own vehicle and bring lunch and water. Please contact District Ecologist Maret Pajutee to RSVP and get details (541) 549-7727, mpajutee@fs.fed.us.

Send us your comments

We would appreciate your thoughts on the following topics:

- ❖ What about Whychus Creek is special or important to you?
- ❖ What do you like or dislike about the river's current management?
- ❖ How should we change the management of Whychus Creek to protect its outstandingly remarkable values?

Please send your comments to Whychus Wild and Scenic River Plan, Project Leader, Maret Pajutee, P.O. Box 249, Sisters, Oregon 97759; Phone (541) 549-7727, FAX (541) 549-7746. E-mail comments should be sent to comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-sisters@fs.fed.us. Those submitting electronic comments must do so only to the e-mail address listed above, must put the project name in the subject line, and must either submit comments as part of the e-mail message or as an attachment only in one of the following three formats: Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or Adobe Portable Document Format (pdf).

Thank you for your interest in this unique river. I hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM ANTHONY
District Ranger